

Fairfax Center Phase II Working Group

Meeting Minutes

January 12, 2016

Attendance

Working Group: Vincent Picciano, Sandria Lherisse, Mark McConn, Tony Wiley, Sherry Fisher, Jeff Parnes, Chris Grisafe, Jeff Saxe

Staff: Kim Rybold (DPZ), Ken Sorenson (DPZ), Meghan Van Dam (DPZ)

Introduction

Vincent Picciano, Chairman of the Fairfax Center Area Phase II Working Group, called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. He referenced the minutes that were distributed to the Working Group prior to the meeting and asked if there were any comments or corrections. Tony Wiley made a motion to approve the minutes (as amended by Sherry Fisher), and Sherry Fisher seconded the motion. The Working Group approved the minutes 5-0 (Jeff Parnes, Chris Grisafe, and Jeff Saxe not yet present).

Kim Rybold provided an overview of the previous meeting's presentations and Core Area discussion, and introduced the objective for this meeting. The goal of this evening's meeting is to present the remaining submissions in the Suburban Center, so that the Working Group can finalize land use scenarios to test at the next meeting. Representatives for Plan Amendment 2015-III-FC1 were unable to attend but will attend the next meeting. To inform the Working Group's discussion, staff will present some background information about the Plan amendment.

Presentation: Submission SS2 (Pender Professional Center)

Kim Rybold distributed a map of maximum planned intensities and densities for the Suburban Center to the Working Group. She then presented the location of Submission SS2, which consists of the area behind the Harris Teeter shopping center located on Route 50. She explained that Sub-unit A3 is currently planned for a mix of uses at the overlay level, and the shopping center and office building on the land were part of one rezoning application. Previously approved for office use, the vacant portion of the site is now approved for 100 units of elderly housing with a substantial affordable component. She explained that the submission seeks to increase the overall intensity to .35 FAR, and to increase the option for elderly housing to 200 units, with the potential for assisted living to also be constructed. Kim Rybold acknowledged the group's earlier discussion about the need to provide senior housing in the area, also pointing out that is close to neighborhood-serving retail for these senior residents.

Jeff Parnes provided some background on the church that previously owned the property, stating that the church originally intended to purchase the commercial land to the south so that they could raise enough money to build the assisted living. The neighborhood to the north was extensively involved in review of the previous proposal so that additional buildings did not block or diminish the view of the existing residents.

Aristotelis Chronis, attorney for Pender Professional Center, LLC, presented the submission sharing that the church that previously occupied the land went through bankruptcy, and ultimately a foreclosure in 2014. His client acquired the property in spring 2015. He reiterated that his client seeks to increase the site intensity from .25 FAR to .35 FAR. He also stated that his client's main focus is to add additional uses in the existing office building through the Proffer Condition Amendment process to make it viable. He stated that the rear of the property is undeveloped and was originally slated for elderly housing. The challenges to this are that the Plan currently recommends 100 units with a substantial affordable housing component. His clients seeks to add mixed uses and also seeks to reduce buffers along the northern boundary of the site, increasing the size of the elderly housing/assisted living to 200 units. He presented further challenges of the property, including the prior bankruptcy/foreclosure of the property and transferring the property from a non-profit owner to one that is for-profit. He stated that his client's objectives were to revitalize the land, explore complementary uses, and increase the amount of elderly housing/assisted living.

He presented three potential options. The first option, labeled Option 3, was the existing plan with senior housing. Option 2 incorporated townhouses into the plan, increasing the residential component. Option 1 provided the option of adding 200 multifamily residential units.

The total size of the land containing the office building and undeveloped land is approximately 18 acres. The client would look to keep the current office building and lease it. The office building is about 77,000 square feet.

Kim Rybold asked for clarification on whether the submission was seeking to just add 200 elderly housing/assisted living units to the existing site or if it was interested in expanding the footprint of the existing uses (office, retail and institutional). Aristotelis explained that his client would want to keep their options open to be able to build a condominium, townhouse or elderly housing in the future. Jeff Parnes asked for further clarification about the underlying density to differentiate between assisted living density and senior living density. Kim Rybold stated that elderly housing and assisted living are measured in different ways within the Zoning Ordinance, but that for the purposes of this analysis, staff just needs to know the overall number of units. Aristotelis confirmed that his client seeks to increase units to a maximum of 200, without any additional bonus units.

Chris Grisafe asked if there was any consideration given to the proximity of the site relative to the location of the hospital. Vincent Picciano pointed out the limited access points to the shopping center. Tony Wiley summarized the submissions intent and pointed out density patterns south of Route 50 versus north of Route 50. In summary, the submission is requesting an increase in density that is inconsistent with the current lower density patterns within this portion of the Suburban Center.

Jeff Parnes noted that there would be more flexibility for redevelopment of this site if the office building were torn down. He pointed out that the piecemeal approach of this submission is not conducive to the Working Group's goal of planning for the next few decades, but instead focuses on the next 10 years. Chris Grisafe asked if a phased redevelopment approach would be possible on this site. Tony Wiley supported Jeff Parnes' position, adding that financially this would benefit the client in the short-term but doesn't align with the current neighborhood because of the increase in

intensity. He also did not know why the group would recommend that the buffer be reduced. He emphasized the need to build or develop something consistent with the current, surrounding area. Chris Grisafe stated that it would be helpful to see a more complete plan for this area.

To help develop a scenario to test for this site, Kim Rybold asked the group what staff should consider. She noted that the group could test multiple options. Chris Grisafe and Jeff Parnes noted that multifamily use that tapers to the north could be considered. Tony Wiley said he could see assisted living on this site, or residential use at a density similar to the site's surroundings, perhaps 5-8 du/ac. Kim Rybold said that staff would think through these ideas and provide some options at the next meeting.

Presentation: Submission SS3 (NRA Museum)

Kim Rybold explained that the NRA, located on Waples Mill Road, seeks to add language that references cultural resources, which would support a museum use. The site is currently zoned in an industrial category, I-5, and would have to rezone to a different industrial zoning classification, I-4, in order to build a museum as a special exception use. The current submission does not include details about size of the use, or whether new structures would be constructed.

Lynne Strobel, representing the NRA, presented the submission and stated that her client is in the very early stages of planning for a future museum. The property is currently zoned I-5, which allows for a maximum intensity of .50 FAR. At the time the NRA headquarters building was developed, the district allowed for an intensity of up to 1.0 FAR with a special exception. The special exception intensity was subsequently lowered to .70 FAR when the Zoning Ordinance was updated. There is a museum currently in the headquarters building, but it is classified as an accessory use. Her client seeks the ability to expand the museum to display donated items, which usually come with a requirement that the items be displayed for the public. She stated that the hours of impact would generally be at or after 10:00 a.m. for arrivals on weekdays, before rush hour for departures on weekdays, or over the weekend. The NRA was given the opportunity to purchase neighboring parcels, shown in red on the map, for eventual construction of this museum. She distributed proposed language for the group to consider which would recommend that museums and cultural centers could be operated on properties planned for office use.

The group moved to a general discussion that a recommendation for cultural centers and museums should be encouraged throughout the Fairfax Center Area and beyond. Aside from George Mason University, the group could not identify any cultural centers near the Fairfax Center Area.

Tony Wiley expressed his support of the proposed Plan text provided by Lynne Strobel and suggested that areas planned for retail should also be included. Jeff Saxe asked if alternatives to office uses are being considered by the larger countywide task for examining vacant office space. Kim Rybold indicated that was not sure where this group was in their process, but staff would gather more information and bring it back to the group.

Presentation: PA 2015-III-FC1 (Fair Lakes – Land Units G, H & I)

Kim Rybold provided an overview of the Board-authorized Plan amendment. She noted that representatives from Peterson Companies, the master developer and one of the major property owners within this area, will attend the next Working Group meeting and present more information

about this Plan amendment. In the mid-2000s several site-specific Plan options were added to the Fair Lakes area for additional residential, hotel, office and retail uses. This Plan amendment proposes that this additional planned intensity, which has not yet been constructed, be distributed throughout the Fair Lakes area. She noted some considerations for this amendment include the need for a defined future vision for the area, a need for criteria for locating uses, and understanding how implementation of this recommendation could work. Tony Wiley noted that since multiple property owners could be affected by this amendment, the other property owners should be notified of the next Working Group meeting. Kim Rybold said they would look into doing this.

Scenario Development Discussion

Kim Rybold asked the group if there were any other areas within the Suburban Center that should be included within the land use scenarios to be tested. Chris Grisafe asked if the large public facilities area (Land Unit N) would should be considered. Jeff Saxe noted that potentially there could be more office use within Sub-unit N3. Kim Rybold advised the group that replanning this area to something other than public facilities may not be appropriate, as the many government entities that own property in that sub-unit are best suited to determine what their future needs may be.

Jeff Parnes discussed the option of repurposing office buildings to residential units and encouraging owners to consider the option, especially for unoccupied buildings. The Working Group generally agreed with the concept but wanted to refrain from targeting specific buildings, particularly if there is not a property owner that has come forward requesting a change. It was suggested that this could potentially be considered as a part of the Areawide policy discussion.

Kim Rybold distributed the revised Core Focus Area scenarios that were discussed at the previous meeting. She noted that the revisions that were requested were made in this handout with two exceptions. First, the portion of the mall property outside of the ring road was not added to the land area for the scenarios, as the Plan currently recommends that the highest level of intensity be placed in that portion of the property. This could create a much higher effective level of intensity than is desired. Second, staff removed the scenarios related to the Government Center parking lot. The intensities that were discussed resulted in over 600,000 square feet of additional office space, and it is questionable if and when the county would have a demand for that space in the future. This level of intensity would be better focused adjacent to the transit station. The county will have the ability to assess its needs in the future once transit is closer to coming to the area. Jeff Saxe expressed his disappointment that this would not be included, as he was hoping to see the area become more pleasant for those walking in the area. Sherry Fisher noted that as a nearby resident, she likes the walking opportunities the property provides, and sees it as a park space.

Upcoming Meetings

Kim Rybold stated that at the next meeting, the group would hear a presentation on the PA 2015-III-FC1 (Fair Lakes) and finalize land use scenarios to test. Once this is complete, the group will begin review of the areawide submissions and Plan guidance, and will discuss the area's implementation strategies. Jeff Parnes volunteered to create a Doodle poll to schedule a date for the next meeting to be held in early February.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.